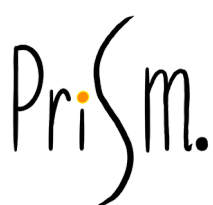




Centre for
Society and
Mental Health



Economic
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Research Council



Perspectives on Religion and Spirituality in
coping with Mental health (PRISM) project

Messages for faith communities

**Get together to speak about mental health
with love, empathy and acceptance**



Get together within groups where people can speak openly about their mental health and be listened to without judgement. Show love, empathy and acceptance. Mental health problems can isolate people, trigger shame and stigma. Talking helps. Seeking mental healthcare does not reflect poor faith. Create spaces to speak about race-based trauma.

**One size does not fit all – the need for mental
health education, intergenerational dialogues
and bespoke support**



Mental health support needs of each person will be different, e.g., across age, gender etc. Education around mental health, mental health language sensitivity and knowing your rights (mental health act and equality acts) are important. Pastoral/group leaders and 'prayer warriors' could be trained and empowered to be 'mental health champions'.



**Nurture collective fellowship,
spirituality and spaces of belonging**



Young people especially would benefit from collective fellowship, feelings of belonging and opportunities to be in leadership positions – to have a say in what faith communities need to consider and do, especially for mental health. Integrating cultural values and inspiring spaces for creative expression e.g., music, can be therapeutic.

**Faith leaders should show vulnerability,
be teachable and be transparent about
their own struggles**



Faith leaders showing vulnerability and being open about own struggles is important. Acknowledge learning from others in your faith community. Reflection, flexibility and adapting methods of fellowship may better engage young people. Faith leaders should receive support for their own mental health. They should say what their capacity to provide mental health support is, and build partnerships to support this.

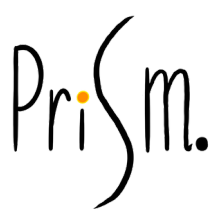




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Messages for faith communities

Team up with clinically trained mental health professionals for mental health awareness and care

Partnerships with mental health professionals can encourage faith members to share struggles, as well as be educated on what they can do for prevention and to maintain good mental health. Hold group discussions during periods of gathering for worship. Education around mental health, mental health language sensitivity and knowing individual rights (mental health act and equality acts) are important.

Encourage mental health support to be part of social care activities in the faith community, where faith leaders are also engaged.



Consider alternative resources within faith communities e.g. sharing personal experiences



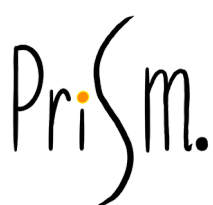
Sharing personal experiences as a resource can be a meaningful way to connect and challenge stigma. Testimonies can give hope. Consider retreats as spaces for well-being. Faith phone support lines and peer support systems can reduce isolation. Use technology as a tool e.g., online services, to increase outreach, engagement and connect people.



Ask for support and build relevant partnerships

Ask for the support and resources you need as spaces to offer mental health support e.g. partnerships with external mental health professionals to offer mental health support in churches. Build links with other churches to share resources and new partnerships.





Messages for healthcare services

Challenge racist assumptions and religious stigma



Spirituality which is not understood can be labelled as mental health problems. Have unapologetic conversations where Black communities feel listened to and understood. Consider how global south religious traditions and spirituality may be stigmatised and discriminated against compared to global north traditions. Engage in anti-racism work as standard practice and training.



Truly listen, humanise and understand

Truly listen to understand the root causes of suffering and trauma - without judgement, racist stereotypes and immediate prescription of medication. Acknowledge that mistrust of services stems from experiences of institutional racism and impacts on how racialised minorities seek help and cope. Create opportunities for mental health professionals to have meaningful engagement with local communities outside of work, to increase cultural awareness and respect.

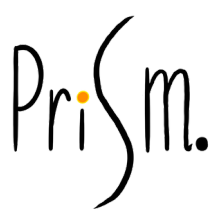


One size does not fit all – the need for intersectionality and bespoke support

Mental health support needs will differ across gender, age and other intersectional identities.

Understand the impact of a lifetime of racist experiences on mental health, how this affect people's worldview and ways in which Black communities cope. Integrate awareness and acceptance of spirituality as ways of coping, and Afrocentric approaches within mental healthcare.





Messages for healthcare services



Engage with Black community networks to co-develop culturally appropriate policies and practices

Create spaces for members from Black faith communities to have a seat at the table (policy and clinical practice) to make decisions and co-develop culturally appropriate policies and practices.

Reciprocity is important - communities should see benefit from their involvement. There should be accountability by including actions and outcomes within policy frameworks. Funding and collaboration needs to be there for the longer term.

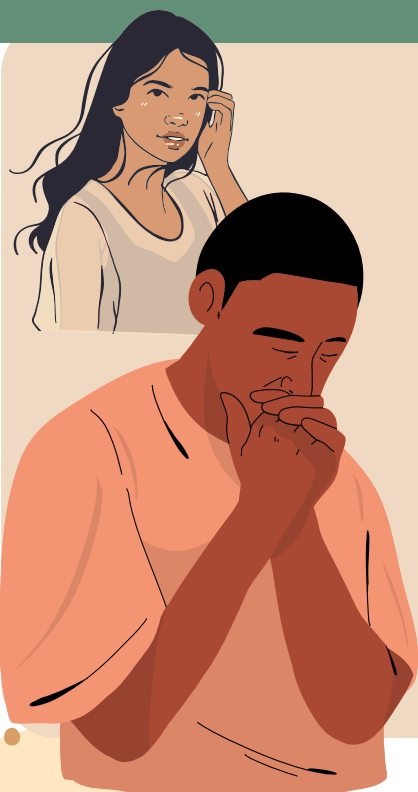


Break cycles of reinforcing inequalities

Inequalities are reinforced by expecting Black people and Black communities to provide Black mental health support. Responsibility for providing culturally sensitive mental healthcare is ultimately with trained mental healthcare providers. Engaging with Black communities should not be gestures but meaningful. Create opportunities for mental health advocacy. Engage with groups leading on inequalities work - NHS RHO, Black Thrive Global, HIRG, TIDES study, MCPG.



Consider how spirituality can be part of interventions



Spirituality can bring calmness and peace, helping with stress and anxiety. Develop spaces for medical and spiritual views to meet in the same room. Respect individuals' faith beliefs and understand the role of spirituality in how they cope. Training from faith members on spirituality and religion can help to build understanding. Offer mental health support to mental health champions from faith communities.